

Subject: 2013 Annual Conference Summary & Resources for Members



Annual Conference
2013

Dear Members of the West Ohio Annual Conference,

Thank you so much for attending the 44th session of our annual conference. I hope you found your time at Lakeside rewarding, spiritually fulfilling, and inspirational. We have much to celebrate in West Ohio and much to be thankful for. The first annual conference with our new bishop, Gregory V. Palmer, gave all of us another opportunity to witness what an inspiring leader and preacher he is. If you wish to review or revisit any of the week's highlights, please go to our [live streaming online archive](#), available through the rest of June; after that date the video footage will be archived on our conference servers.

In addition to this written summary and the daily written/video/photo summaries on our [website](#), we've created a week recap video available [here to watch](#) and [here to download](#) for showing to your congregations.

As you report to your congregations the happenings of our annual conference session, please keep in mind these highlights and resources:

Theme:

Our theme this year, "Taken, is the first in a series that focuses on the different steps of the Eucharist, and how they show God's desire for relationship with us in "becoming the beloved community of Christ." "Blessed," "Broken," and "Given" are the remaining three steps to be

covered in future annual conference sessions.

Worship:

Monday and Wednesday provided an opportunity to hear Bishop Palmer preach, celebrate communion and baptism together, and give our missional offerings.

Monday's message from our bishop was on being "Called by Name" as God's spirit and work in our lives brings renewal. He showed that God continues to bring a turning point in our lives, from sinfulness, alienation and desolation; to relationship, reconciliation and hope. Using Isaiah 43 as a backdrop, Bishop Palmer voiced the heart of God in this renewal, saying, "I've not only redeemed you, I've called you by name. You are precious. You are mine." Following his message, the bishop held in his arms Aurora Elena Pettingill, newborn daughter to Rev. David and Lindsey Pettingill, and baptized her with the reaffirmation of all conference members present.

On Wednesday morning, Bishop Palmer refined the meaning of the key word from the theme "Taken," as conference members came to a deeper understanding of being God's Beloved. As we are taken, we have been chosen by the heart and hands of God. This action is past and has already been completed, though it is continually acted out in the midst of other narratives attempting to direct the story of our lives. And there is a sense of urgency, as Christ offers, "Take and eat." Without Him, waiting to be worthy or following another narrative would leave us starving, and the bread would be left on the table. Bishop Palmer showed that there is a world in need of his nourishing truth, this life-giving story. "What will you take, as in carry, into the world?" he asked.

Celebration of Life and Ministry Service

A processional of bright banners leading the new candidates along with Elders and Deacons, followed by members of the Cabinet and Bishop Palmer, opened the Celebration of Life and Ministry Worship

Service. A solemn bell echoed from the stage with the reading of each name from the Roll of the Victorious. Those who passed away this year were commended to God's arms and holy peace as a bagpipe played "Flowers of the Forest." Conference members also recognized and honored the retiring class with thankfulness for their response to God's call, and for the great good that God has accomplished through their ministries. This retiring class represents an extraordinary 1,218 years served in ministry.

Bishop Callon Holloway, Jr., from the Southern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, spoke of the service of ministers and Christians to the whole church, working together in unity, no matter the denomination. With obedience and trust in Jesus, who holds us all tightly, we are called to overcome fears and differences to do the difficult work of bringing God's people together for the sake of the world.

Bishop Palmer commissioned 3 Provisional Deacons and 28 Provisional Elders, and ordained 1 Deacon and 11 Elders.

Bible Study

Bishop Palmer invited Dr. Elaine Robinson, Academic Dean and Associate Professor of United Methodist Studies and Theology at Saint Paul School of Theology at Oklahoma City University, to speak on the annual conference theme of "Taken," during 3 Bishop's Bible Study sessions.

Dr. Robinson taught passionately that the Eucharist is the central image of our faith because at one table, we have both the redemption and the promise of new life, as well as justification and sanctification, forgiveness and restoration to the image of God. "We are taken by God to be taken with God and to be taken with others." Through this sacrament, we become the body of Christ to be sent out into the world, and we see the beginning of becoming the beloved community of Christ. When we are taken with God, it is not about being alone

with God, but about being part of the beloved community, for we were made to be in loving relationship with each other. In our sanctified human life, we should experience abundance, perfection and peace. She also pointed out that we often think of salvation as going to heaven, but salvation is being saved from sin, being reconciled to God, and being made whole in the love of God and relationship with God in this life. Robinson also made a clear and crucial connection between personal and social holiness, that being taken with God is to be taken into community with believers, and to love others. Making disciples for the transformation of the world comes through radical relationships.

Missional Offering:

Bishop Palmer, along with Rev. George Cooper, Rev. Mike Slaughter, and Rev. Paul Risler announced the launch of West Ohio's commitment over 3 years of \$3.5 M to the Imagine No Malaria Campaign. Ginghamburg United Methodist Church has dedicated their Christmas Offering this year to the campaign, and pledged \$1M. Commitment cards were handed out to members with the opportunity to pledge and/or learn more. Additional information will be forthcoming from the Bishop and Rev. Cooper this summer detailing how to get involved and providing resources. If you want more information on this amazing commitment we have made to help eliminate preventable deaths due to malaria, read this article: [West Ohio Pledges \\$3.5 Million to Nix Malaria](#)

Workshops

Three workshops were held on Sunday afternoon, and nine Summer Shorts workshops were held on Monday evening. (Originally 10 were scheduled but the "Church Communications" workshop was cancelled due to an illness in the speaker's family.) I hope you were able to attend at least one of these very informative workshops and take back resources to your churches. Information about each of the three Sunday afternoon workshops is [here](#). Summer Shorts summaries are [here](#).

Laity Session

Tom Slater, the West Ohio Conference Lay Leader, opened the session in prayer and welcomed Bishop Palmer to the stage who provided a welcome and greeting. Guest speakers, Jim and Jennifer Cowart then spoke to the session on the importance of listening to what God is saying to our churches, and examining how we are envisioning and operating our ministries. Jim is the founding pastor of Harvest Church, a United Methodist Congregation, located in South Georgia. Harvest launched in 2001 with an emphasis on reaching the non-churched. His wife, Jennifer is the Christian Education and Emerging Ministries Director at Harvest. Together, they started a church “from scratch,” and have now seen more than 2,000 people come to belief in Christ. Jim and Jennifer spoke about different tools for recapturing the passion of Christ, pointing out that it is vital that the Church regain its passion for sharing Christ to non-believers in our communities. They encouraged leaders to think differently about ministry, and find new ways to reach out to others. And most importantly, they encouraged conference members to start now, to take action on the Great Commission. “Jesus, the king of the universe, knows your name and he calls it,” Jim said in conclusion, “But he also asks you to call out the name of the people who haven’t come to your church, yet.

Business

One of the purposes for an annual conference session is to do the business of the annual conference. Members heard reports each day from various ministries from West Ohio and across the denomination, reporting how West Ohio has involved itself in transforming the world.

- The 2012 Missional Report gives an overview of West Ohio’s key ministry areas as of December 31, 2012 and is available [here](#) for viewing and downloading:
- Four Constitutional Amendments were voted on in West Ohio and in all other annual conferences across the denomination. Results are collected by the denomination. Information about

the amendments can be found on [page 19 of the Book of Reports](#)

- Here's a quick rundown of the Recommendations voted on by membership. Details about the recommendations can be found in the [Book of Reports starting on page 22](#)

- #1: Passed Council on Finance and Administration
- #2: Passed Camp Sabroski
- #3: Passed Commission on Equitable Compensation
- #4: Passed Board of Pension and Health Benefits
- #5: Passed Resolution To Support Global Maternal/Child Health
- #6: Passed Resolution for West Ohio Conference Advance Special
- #7: Defeated Petition Requesting Conference Education and Conversation on the Nature, Role, Authority and Interpretation of Scripture
- #8: Withdrawn Formation of a Rural, Town & Country Task Force

Some Basic Stats and Facts:

- 1132 lay members, 960 clergy, 264 spouses, 292 visitors were in attendance at Lakeside
- Next year's annual conference dates are June 8-12, 2014
- 5K Run/Walk had 420 participants with the following first place winners:
 - Men's Run: First place to Logan Perry with a time of 18:23
 - Women's Run: First place to Keri Schmidt with a time of 25:23
 - Men's Walk: First place to Robert Downs with a time of 41:46
 - Women's Walk: First place to Elaine Parulis-Wright with a time of 43:25.
- Offerings taken during the week:
 - Clergy Development \$6,551.68
 - Kits & Shipping \$2474.59
 - Imagine No Malaria \$100,211.52

- **Awards/Recognition:**

Denman Youth Award was presented to Nicholas Brown of
Lindenwald United Methodist Church

Clergy Denman Award was presented to Pastor Mike Berry of
Medway United Methodist Church

Telling the Story Video Award went to Central Avenue United
Methodist Church (Athens) for their video "[Just a
Chair:259](#)"

The West Ohio Conference was presented with the award for
the highest total amount of designated giving to the
Advance in 2012, \$2.6 million.

Resources:

Breakthrough videos, Candidacy Summit video, Imagine No Malaria,
and other videos shown at annual conference, are available on the
[West Ohio Conference YouTube Channel here](#). We encourage the use
of all of these videos in your churches.

Copies of the Program & Event Guide and Celebration of Life and
Ministry Program are available [here](#).

Daily Summaries with a video, write up and photos for each day are
available here:

- [Sunday](#)
- [Monday](#)
- [Tuesday](#)
- [Wednesday](#)
- Week in Review video [here to watch](#) and [here to download](#)

I hope you'll find this brief summary of the many wonders of the week
at Lakeside helpful. It's certainly not complete. I'm confident you'll
add your own personal favorites and highlights to your report to your
congregations. We welcome your thoughts on this year's conference
(as well as any reaction from your congregation) as we review and
plan for next year!

By the way, DVD's from the 2013 Annual Conference may be ordered [here](#).

Always inspired by all you do in His name,

Lisa Streight
Director of Communications



32 Wesley Blvd | Worthington OH | 43085 | (614) 844-6200
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